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## NEW PRODUCT REVIEWS
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# Savage Garden and Screaming Girls

## Good clean fun

Photo: David Anderson

Oooohh, I think I'll become a sound check groupie. This is definitely fun, sitting in the beautiful, picture-palace style Enmore theatre, watching Savage Garden get ready for tonight.

Guys with stubble and mobile phones are scurrying around, other guys with TV cameras on their shoulders are hovering, the photographer is getting the brief on where he can't stand, the tour manager is managing.

Darren is chatting to friends and crew, looking very pretty, sweet, and young. Two girls are giggling over WHO magazine.

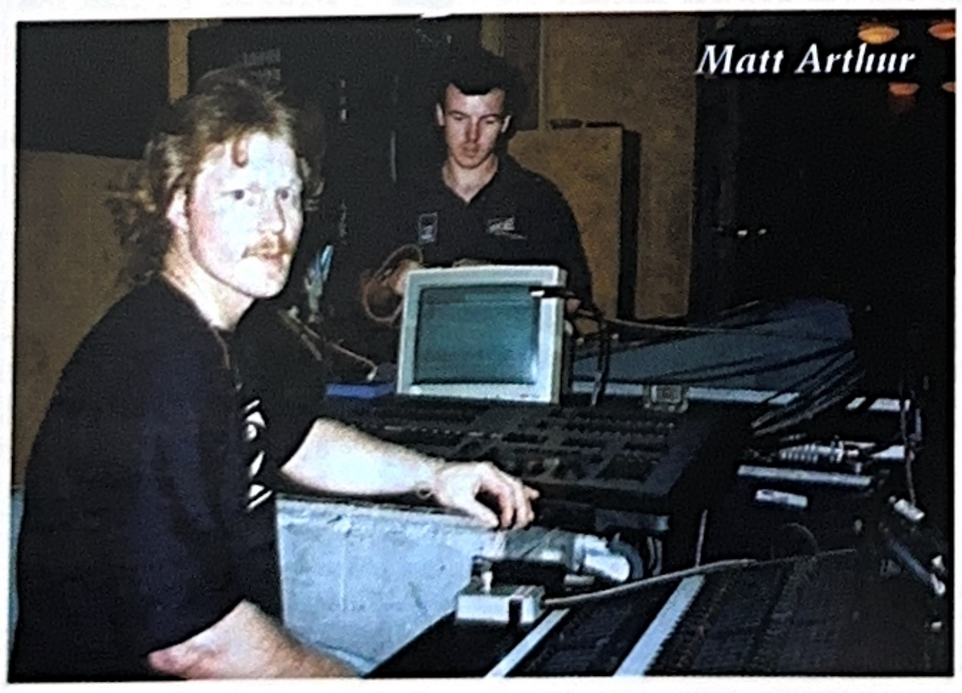
After a while, the band gets up on stage and the sound and light crew work on all those little details. Like the back up singer's monitor, the light right at her feet, the moving light that isn't moving.

This is one of those tricky tours: eleven shows, nine venues, nine production companies, eight different consoles, six speaker systems, four states. The crew have been working hard to keep up the pace of different standards and equipment between states.

The enthusiasm around the band is palpable. Everyone suspects they might be on the verge of a phenomenal phenomenon. The boys are sweet, and immensely talented. It all seems so natural. Every song feels like a hit. Darren has a stunning, theatrical thrilling voice, the vocals and harmonies are divine, over the arrangements and complex layers created by Daniel.

During sound check, Darren is relaxed, and amiable. When a mobile phone rings on stage, he says, "It's the Post Office. Your sea monkeys died." A joke which he thinks is hilarious, and so do I.

At night, Darren becomes the quintessential rock star, aqua and pink lights reflecting off his tight black shiny trousers. He moves eloquently, and bends down a lot to touch the outstretched hands of the girls, a gesture which drives the entire audience crazy. I haven't heard such great girl screams and swoons since early Beatle footage.



Matt Arthur

**Sound**

The sound, mixed by Glenn Inglis, is rich and complex, with a lot of respect for the vocals. "Last night the sound was pretty good," Inglis says. "Savage Garden has got to be clean, clear, and punchy. There were a lot of people from overseas, TV, promoters, and management. It's all eyes on this band at the moment, so we had to go out and spend a few dollars, and make sure we put a good sound system in.

"I'm quite happy with it, but I still need to try lots of vocal mics. They're good, but there are a couple of bits in the show where I'd just like to find the ultimate. I like trying different mics, and finding what's right for each thing. It's ok just putting up what you know from experience, but you've got to try and make it better. With technology now, there's so much out there."

I was bowled over by Darren, though I was too dignified to scream, and by the back up singers (the WHO readers). "They come from the Brisbane pub scene, four shows a night, which I think is good training to be able to play day in, day out," Inglis says. "The band has progressed from day one. The first couple of days were a bit iffy there.

"It took a few days to find stuff. There are eight channels of keyboard, coming out of the rack. There is a lot of stuff coming out of the samplers. We've worked on tidying up edits, and getting it smoother. The band has come together really well. The crowd noise is just amazing! I haven't heard a noise like this for years!"

Inglis has been stretched trying to make a great show every night, in a different venue, with different gear. "Sometimes you turn up, and the house guy, or the house equipment, are just nowhere up to standard. Sometimes the gear's ok, but it's just such poor maintenance, it's a pile of rubbish. So, we've had a few fun days on this! We're going, 'It'll work soon, they'll get it working soon!' And then you go and actually put your head in something and make it work for them. It's not really part of the job, but it's ok.

"Some of the stuff has been really good, like what we hired last night from a company called Norwest. The Soundcraft Europa is their main console. In Melbourne it was a Yamaha, Adelaide a different Soundcraft. That was the fourth Soundcraft console I've seen in ten days.

"Some people don't like the Europa, because it doesn't fit across the truck, and it's

Glenn Inglis

just too big. The Yamaha is about a foot shorter, you can actually reach each end!

"Gearwise, it's a bit of a task for us. I've got a bee in my bonnet about it. I wish that when these companies go to something like Entech, they would actually ask each other, 'So what are you thinking about buying?' That they would look at what all the international and local touring guys want. I tour around a lot, and there's a lot of nice gear, but there are standards you expect from the touring guy in America, or the better acts around the country.

"I just wish you could get the same gear in each town, so you could get your little book out, and mark it all up the same. It gives you a better starting point. In each different state, Matt has three different types of light. They move differently, they have a slightly different colour, it's crazy!"

Michael Davenport, tour manager and Roger Sommers, LA Producer

**Lights**

Matt Arthur, LD, has done a fantastic job. The stage has several vertical trusses of lights scattered around, and a central lyrca backdrop which takes projections, framed between two black drapes. The lights are exciting, but not dominating. There are dramatic sweeps and shafts onto the audience. The tone is just right for this show.

"Savage Garden are basically a dance/pop band," Arthur says, "so I tried to get a nightclub feel, but with a lot of imaging. Because the band are so popular, when the girls see them in silhouette, they love it. If you can create some atmoshphere with those guys, and build the tension, then it gets the crowd more and more into it. I went for big strong colour looks, a cross between The Cure, and Pink Floyd, with strong pinks and greens and blues.

"Tonight was the first time I could get to the audience, because it was the first time I had some moving lights. Whenever I hear *Truly*, their big ballad single, I think of big rotating Gobos out into the audience.

"My right ear is deaf from the girls screaming, it was so loud!"

The rig and the lighting had an appealing lack of symmetry. "There was a bar of mediums, which is pure wash, and then behind that was a bar of ACLs, open white shooting through the front line. Midstage there was a bar each, but one moving light on one side. One light on the floor behind that, and two on the back truss. It was just all scattered around, it's dance club. It's not meant to be symmetrical and pretty. It's meant to be beams of light shooting through people and coming from the floor and going out into the audience. The truss of lights behind the singers were staggered heights, one was 16' and the one next to it was 8'. So instantly you've got this big height difference, high and low, and different beam angles.

"I wanted to throw away symmetry, and do something bizarre, and a bit off the wall. At the same time, my advice to myself was 'Keep it simple, stupid.' Use the moving lights and robos as effects. Bring it in for every couple of songs, and fade it out. Don't try to do cue to cue stuff, it just doesn't work, especially in a show that's not programmed properly. You're taking pot luck when you hit that button whether it's going to work or not. Most of the time last night, it worked!"

But with so many different venues, it hasn't been easy. "We've been starting from scratch, setting up the show each time. It's been really difficult to try and find some normality, and regularity in gear. We started in a grunge pub in Perth, then to a concert hall. The third was a really bad venue, so I couldn't do much. Then we went to the Thebarton Theatre in Adelaide. That was for one night and we didn't get the Robocolors working until after the doors opened! Then we were at the Palace in Melbourne, with yet again another house system, plus hired extras."

The big issues for Arthur and Inglis, is the lack of regularity of gear through the states. "You can't design something, fax it off to all the companies in different states, and know that you'll get the same show wherever you go," Arthur says. "That's the hardest part. Other than that, I had the first show I was happy with last night."

They're off to Newcastle, Brisbane and Ipswich in the next four days. Arthur has been LD for Tommy Emmanuel, Boom Crash Opera, and others that he can't remember.

Arthur likes Robocolors. "They're a fantastic light, because you've got so many colour opportunites, and the colours are really brilliant. They're small and portable and they work."

He was using a Jands Hog for the Enmore show. "It's quite a good desk once you get yourself in the starting position. The set up process is sometimes a little bit long. But once you start, it's pretty easy to rush along and do some quick programming on it, if you set it out properly. It's a good console, certainly easy to operate, once you get your head around it. It's extra hard, if you're not using the same gear every day, setting up different parameter, and different positions for the lights. But that's not the console's fault."

His final word of advice! "Gear that works, and some sort of standard between the states. Glenn's got the same comments. At least with a PA, you can stack it, and point it, then tune it up. With a light show, you've got to make it work then focus it, program it, and stuff. It's pretty hard."

**The LA take, and the vocals**

Roger Sommers, chief engineer at Royaltone Studios, in LA was over for the show. He has done studio work with Don Henley, Van Halen, and more.

"I thought the sound was good," Sommers said. "I would like to have heard some more things, but the space itself was a good sounding space, which is so important. They did a very nice job.

*continued on page 53*

Dalmer's Sampler Racks

# ROUGH RIDERS

Food! Now I know I've mentioned this before, but you have to admit it can become an obsession when away from home. I've seen entire crews break into a sweat (not from hard work) and start trembling if they think they won't be able to get a supply of their favourite foods. I call this "Boarding School Syndrome" or BSS for those in the know. You wake up at 3am and you've got a craving, for me it's always Mars Bars. My Mum used to send me a cake tin full of them at the start of every school term. I could never make them stretch beyond the first week. Then the nightly sweats would begin and to this day the sound of an empty cake tin being rattled can bring on a fever.

Touring is like being at Boarding School when it comes to food, you're in a foreign place and your familiar corner shop is a long way away. This desire for a certain unavailable food can severely hamper the quality of work being undertaken. I once toured with a lighting tech who was addicted to Jelly Babies. We were on a long tour in fairly remote places, he'd been smart and packed a major supply in his backpack. Unfortunately our luggage went astray (we'll deal with this issue another time) and within twenty four hours he'd polished off his emergency supply.

In the morning I discovered that he'd spent the night making jelly bean gobos and had put them in about 30 profiles, all projected onto the cyc in bright Jelly Bean colours. It was a sad sight.

Tim Tams always seem to be a popular addiction for people. Again I think it's got some tie-in with childhood. Some brave people try and fight these addictions, but my word of advice is never go touring with anyone who's trying to go cold turkey from a food addiction, particularly if it's Tim Tams.

I'm a bit concerned about Ben Elton at the moment. He's out here touring and I was checking out his *Rider* the other day just to see if comedians eat the same kind of food the rest of us do. He wanted the usual sandwiches with meat and cheese, fruit, bottled water etc. Nothing alarming there. Then I come to this little gem and I know I've spotted a Tim-Tamaholic trying to dry out.

"A nice sweet treat surprise like a Tim Tam - but only ONE!!!!!!!

Who does he think he's kidding? Anyone can clearly see that this is a cry for help. The poor man is obviously hopelessly addicted and can't trust himself to stop at a moderate one.

*Rufus B.*

# Savage Garden

*continued from page 51*

"For an act like that, the most important thing is to be able to hear the vocal, and you could hear the vocal. That's what most people tune into. There was a study done at Johns Hopkins University in the 70s, and people basically listen to the vocal, and the beat. They don't tune into anything else, unless they're interested in music specifically."

This was the first live show that Sommers had seen here. "It seems like everything is on a smaller scale, probably because there is not as much money to be made.

"But there are a lot of very talented people in this country, I thought it was very well done. Everybody seems to be very knowledgable about what they do.

"The US is a rich breeding ground for audio industry people. There's 15 or 20 huge multinational touring sound companies based out of the US. And we have the cream of the crop in recording studios. Most of the money is to be made touring in the US.

"But I was very impressed. I must admit I was more impressed with what I've seen here, than what I've seen in Europe."

• ***Madeleine Murray***

# LIVE's live sound

*continued from opposite page*

PCM 70's (reverbs), an AMS RMX16 (reverb), and a TC Electronic 2290 multi-effector for auto panning and delay. Sitting between all these was a Roland SDE 3000, an old friend which was pressed into use for those simple (yet hard to get quickly) l-o-n-g delays, like over one second. Lemon discovered later the TC2290 had an optional 2.8 seconds capability. But he loves that Roland. It's an issue when mixing. You need a simple way to get a long delay, and most modern multi-effectors dick around at the user interface. Get an older digital delay and go for it.

The bottom of one effects racks was loaded with dbx 160A compressor limiters, the other had a batch of Drawmer dual noise gates.

Lemon used SM 58 vocal microphones, Sennhieser 414's on guitars, and a Shure SM 57 on the snare top (with a 414 underneath). The objective (make it sound big without killing you) was truly met. Next stop the European circuit, where you can mix on a different desk every night - which truly sorts out the good engineers from the upstarts!

• ***Julius Grafton***

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